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E.O. 12598: DECL: 06/12/2028

TAGS: PHUM PREL KIRF NW CH

SUBJECT: NORWEGIANS SAY TIBET DIALOGUE MAY BE IN JULY

Classified by Political Minister Counselor Aubrey Carlson. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) Press reports of a "secret Norwegian communication channel" with representatives of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese Government are significantly overstated, Norwegian First Secretary Jo-Inge Bekkevold told PolOff June 12. The Norwegian Government has relatively good contacts with the Dalai Lama's representatives and with the United Front Work Department in the Chinese Government, but this does not represent a "special back channel," he said.

¶12. (C) Recent Norwegian Embassy discussions with the United Front Work Department and the Dalai Lama's representatives indicate that the next session of talks between the Dalai Lama's representatives and the Chinese Government could occur the first week of July. Bekkevold said the Chinese Government told the Norwegians that the talks were originally scheduled for June 11, but that this date slipped because of the Sichuan earthquake. Bekkevold opined that the real reason for postponing the Tibet dialogue is to avoid drawing attention from the June 12-13 talks in Beijing between Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the Mainland's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait (ARATS).

¶13. (C) Bekkevold said that Norway has been watching the Beijing-Dalai Lama talks for years, and that he does not see any prospects for progress in the short term. "We have spoken to both sides," Bekkevold said, "and the sticking point remains the same: the Tibetans will not budge from their demand that China recognize their concept of "greater Tibet," which includes large parts of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. The Tibetan side has shown no flexibility at all on this issue, he said, and China will not compromise either. "There is a great deal of mistrust on both sides. For that reason, I do not think we are likely to see progress any time soon."

PICCUTA